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A Study of Shakespeare's Versification, with an Inquiry into the Trustworthiness of the Early Texts, an Examination of the 1616 Folio of Ben Jonson's Works, and Appendices, Including a Revised Text of Antony and Cleopatra. By M. A. BAYFIELD. Cambridge: University Press, 1920. Pp. xii+521.

In essentials this is an important book. "Its purpose is," the Preface states, "first to give an intelligible and consistent account of the structure and characteristic features of his [Shakespeare's] dramatic verse." The intelligibility and consistency are marred by insistence on the wayward theory of a trochaic basis for English meter, previously set forth by the author, and by a profuse assumption of monosyllabic and often difficult polysyllabic feet. It seems to most students of English poetry that such *hora novissima*, thick-and-thin theories of verse are not only false but meaningless; that they are less sufficient than a simple description of all good verse, especially dramatic, as a weaving about a verse-norm of any sort of arabesque variant which leaves the norm still perceptible; that the usual norm, since English verse tends to begin with an unaccented and end with an accented syllable, is both in origin and actually what is called iambic; but that unless a poet is otherwise known to have followed some *ars poetica* of more rigid kind, all Procrustean, pseudo-classical schemes for his verse are as painful to the reader as they would have been to the poet. The older theories of prosody, to put the thing briefly, did not sufficiently recognize gradations, and erred by treating it in the manner of the mathematical and not the biological sciences. Herein Mr. Bayfield the classicist also errs. But his perverse theory, with all the arbitrary judgments and strong language¹ which go with it, is not essential to the fresh contribution made by his book. This, namely, is the proof that Shakespeare employed slurred three-syllable "feet" far more than has been recognized, and more than was usual in his day; that he employed them oftener and oftener; that the early editions, especially the First Folio, tend purposely to conceal or alter them; that such colloquial forms as "do't," "is't," used in the Folio for this purpose, are, however, not monosyllabic but merely indicate slurring. The last two points are well supported by examination of the quartos, of prose passages, and of the 1616 folio of Jonson. It is Shakespeare's preference for the fuller manner of recitation, Mr. Bayfield opines (p. 291), "which he had in his mind more than anything else when he made Hamlet say to the players, 'Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounced it to you, *trippingly on the tongue*.'" Here we find Mr. Bayfield's second purpose, "to show that there are many thousands of lines of it [the poet's dramatic verse] that

¹ He brands as "rag-time scansions" (p. 10) such lovely or finished movements as that of Dante's

Dolce color d'oriental zaffiro,

and of Chaucer's

Liveth a lyf blisful and ordinat.

are given in modern texts not as their author intended them to be delivered, but clipped and trimmed," etc. Hereby he displaces the timid and conventional treatments of the subject by Fleay, Abbott, and less-known writers. The reader must grant him that the proportion of such extended feet, as to which he presents figures, affords at times a fresh kind of evidence for dating the plays, and that the reader and the actor should allow themselves more freedom than heretofore in pronouncing light syllables, however much such abbreviations as "on't," "i'th'," may be endeared by association. As to choosing printed forms, whether an editor should go counter to the wholesome modern tendency, more and more justified by bibliographical science, to stick to the early authorities, is another question. Of the fruitfulness of this minute study of the early editions, and of the influence of one or two eminent English exponents of it, this book is one more example, based though it is like Nebuchadnezzar's image. There is yet more infiltration of clay than I have shown; but there is also more iron, notably the attack (pp. 403 ff.) on Dowden's sentimental view as to Shakespeare's "period of gloom." There is iron enough to keep the book erect. It is a singular mixture of the amateurish and the doctrinaire with diligence, enterprise, and keenness.

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RECENT WORKS ON PHASES OF THE ENGLISH RENAISSANCE

A brief appraisal is given here of a group of works in the field of the Renaissance in England or having a bearing upon it, in order that attention may be called, in the limited space available, to as many as possible of the recent studies that are important for the period.

A survey of the Renaissance and Reformation in Europe as a whole is attempted in the two volumes of Henry Osborn Taylor's *Thought and Expression in the Sixteenth Century* (New York: Macmillan, 1920). Of the five divisions of the work, the first is given to a study of the Renaissance in Italy from Petrarch and Boccaccio to Ariosto, with special chapters for the "publicists" and for the painters. The second records the movements in Germany that culminated in Erasmus and Luther. The third surveys those of France from Louis XI to Calvin with emphasis on a small number of outstanding figures. The fourth deals with England, elaborating—after a passing sketch of the educational thought and activity of the sixteenth century—Wycliffe's career, Lollardism in the fifteenth century, and the progress of the Reformation in its relation to the political problems of the sixteenth century from Tyndale to Hooker. It closes with succinct estimates and eulogies of a small group of men of action and of literary men as inspired voices of the great age. The fifth is concerned with the progress of philosophy and science in the period. The book will prove of real value both to the special student, who will find in it a large body of information in a compact